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ABSTRACT

This series of 10 booklets provides information to new parents on their infants' behavior and development. The topics covered in the four-page booklets are: (1) "Welcome to the World of Babies," including information on infants' communication, baby books, and developmental milestones from birth to 9 months; (2) "Language: All about Communication," including suggestions for activities using music and rhythm; (3) "Baby's Very First Toys," including suggestions for toys and songs; (4) "Good Health Starts with Nutrition," including information on choking hazards, immunizations, and maternal health; (5) "Read to Your Baby," including non-reading activities that lay foundation for learning to read; (6) "Choosing and Using Child Care," including information on extended family relationships and on developmental milestones from 6 to 36 months; (7) "Simple Activities Develop Young Minds," discussing the importance of play and providing play suggestions; (8) "Learning Positive Behaviors," introducing positive discipline; (9) "The Impact of Being a Parent," including parents' role as teachers; and (10) "Nutrition: Keep It Natural," including information on food choices. (KB)

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Welcome to the World of Babies

Congratulations on your new baby. Whether you have just added an infant to your household or are about to, you're entering a whole new world. It's a happy time, but it's also a little scary. Babies are small and helpless, and you may wonder how ready you are to take on this big new job.

The best known of all pediatricians probably offers the most reassuring words. Dr. Benjamin Spock told parents: "Remember, you know more than you think you do." But you have an expert even closer than Dr. Spock's book—your baby.

Brand-new babies can decide at least four things from day one:

- when to eat
- when to stop eating
- when to sleep
- when to wake up

A good deal of common sense goes into bringing up babies. As a reasonable and loving parent, you will feed your baby when she's hungry, comfort her when she's lonely or in pain, and stimulate brain development by talking and reading to her.

Excellent help is available to you from doctors, nurses, books, and publications such as this one. These briefs are short and to the point, but the information is from experts who learned with both research and practice. Consider what you read here, do the best you can, and try not to worry too much. Enjoy your baby, and baby will enjoy you, too.

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Baby's Tears Tell

Crying is a baby's first way to communicate. Your baby's cries can tell you about different needs. "I'm hungry. I'm tired. I have a pain in my tummy. I'm lonely. Pay attention to me." Soon you will be able to tell which is which.

Some people may tell you that paying too much attention to your baby will "spoil" him. Don't worry. Babies, unlike milk, don't spoil—especially not from too much attention. They need all the nurturing, love, and understanding you and others can give.

Sooner than you can believe, your baby will be so busy she won't have time for you. Take advantage of the opportunity now to hold her and rock her and sing to her. It's your reward for being a loving parent.

SIDS Foundation Suggestions

Every year in this country some 3,500 babies die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). That's about 10 babies a day—and we still don't know why and how it happens. But doctors hope that following these steps will reduce those numbers.

1. Always lay a healthy baby face up to sleep.
2. Don't allow smoking near the baby.
3. Don't let the baby get too hot.
4. Lay the baby to sleep on a firm mattress.
5. Create a healthy lifestyle for you and your baby.
6. If possible, breast-feed your baby.

Never Ever Shake a Baby or Child

Don't ever shake an infant or child, not even in a playful way. Shaking can damage a baby's brain, and can result in death.

Don't throw a baby in the air, and don't let anyone else do it. This kind of play can cause blindness, seizures, and mental retardation.

Go Ahead and Goo

Here's some good news. It turns out that silly-sounding baby talk can be good for your baby's learning potential. Many people instinctively use high-pitched, exaggerated tones with babies, and a recent study found that it's good for them.

Another study showed that such talk also soothes crying, and it helps babies learn the sounds of their native language. Talking to your baby also stimulates the development of the brain and lays the foundation for future learning success. Be sure to talk to your baby about everything that is going on around her. Say things like "This is a green leaf" or "See the blue clouds in the sky?" She will soon be using those words.

About Baby Books

Read to your baby from the very beginning. Even though he might not understand the words, he will love the sound of your voice and being held in your arms. But he will soon want to get his hands on the book, so be prepared.

Babies use all their senses to learn. He will want to chew the book. He may shake it, or try to separate the pages. Soft cloth and vinyl books that can be washed are available. Some babies like to sleep with soft books.

You can sometimes find children's books at yard sales. Exchanging books with other parents of babies is a good idea, too.

Taking care of babies and young children can be tiring and frustrating. It is a good idea to write down some things that will help you relax when you feel frustrated. Your plan can include putting the baby in a safe place while you listen to music, doing some housework, or calling someone. This plan is important because it is hard to think clearly when you are feeling upset. Arrange to have some time to yourself, to relax and enjoy other things. Being good to yourself will also be good for your baby.

Most Babies . . .

Every child is different, but there are general milestones in development. Here are some for the first nine months, from the National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education.

At one month, most babies

Lift head a little when lying on stomach.
Watch objects for a short time.
Make "noise in throat" sounds.
Sleep, cry, and wiggle.

At two months, most babies

Hold their head up.
Sometimes smile back at a smiling person.
Roll partway to side.
Make sounds of discomfort.

At three months, most babies

Lift head and chest when lying on stomach.
Recognize bottle or breast.
Smile when talked to.
Show active body movement.
Follow moving things with their eyes.

At four months, most babies

Hold head up for a long time without bobbing.
Laugh out loud.
Roll from front to back.
Grab object held near their hand.
Make sounds when talked to.

At six months, most babies

Sit with little support.
Roll from back to stomach.
Turn and look at sounds.
Change object from hand to hand or mouth.

At nine months, most babies

Say "mama" and "dada."
Crawl, creep, or scoot.
Respond to people they know.
Respond to their name.

Remember, all children grow and develop at their own pace. If you have concerns about your child's development, trust your instincts. Contact your physician or your local early intervention program by calling your department of human services.

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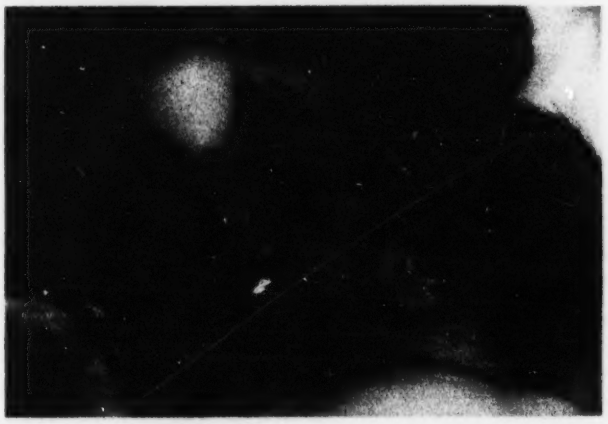
Family Connections
Early Start

Language: All about Communication

People tell one another about thoughts, feelings, and events by listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These communication skills build on one another. As babies learn the spoken language, they lay the groundwork for learning to read and write.

One idea for helping your baby learn to listen and speak is to take your baby outdoors and describe the trees, grass, birds, houses, and other things you see. Your baby will participate, listening as you speak and making sounds and words for you to hear.

You can also help your baby get ready to read and write by finding simple books with colorful pictures. You and your baby can look at these books together. Talk about words you read and pictures you see. Let your baby take part in this process in his own way. When your baby can hold a crayon, pencil, or marker, let her write. Scribbling on paper helps young children develop coordination, grip, and other skills they will need for writing.



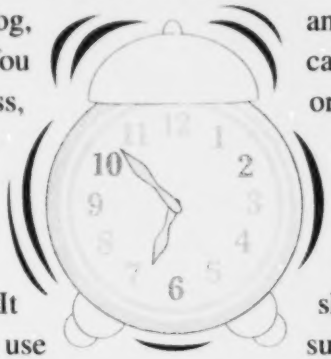
Singing is another way to communicate. Sing to your baby. Don't worry about carrying a tune or remembering the words. You might even make up a song as you go. Before long, your baby will try to sing along.

Babies and young children also learn about language and communication by how you respond to them. It is important to answer your child's cries, coos, gurgles, and later, their frequent questions. You can answer them with words such as, "Yes, you are feeling happy today!" or with gestures such as cuddling.

These experiences seem simple and natural, but they are also important. They give your baby what is needed to start making sense of spoken and written language.

Did You Hear That?

Hold your baby in your arms and take a "listening walk." You can walk both inside and outside. Whenever you find something that is making a sound, listen to the sound and then talk about it to your baby. Tell what is making the sound. Talk about whether the sound is loud or soft. You might hear an alarm clock, a barking dog, an ambulance siren, an airplane, or a dishwasher. You can also make sounds: ring a bell, tap a spoon on a glass, or clap your hands. This is a good experience for other children, too. Make it a family walk.



Be sure to protect babies and all young children with sunscreen. It should have a protection factor of 15 or more. Don't use sunscreen on babies under six months old; they should not be exposed to sun. Use the carriage or stroller awning for cover. Broad-brimmed hats provide good protection, too—for you and the young ones.

Hearing Music

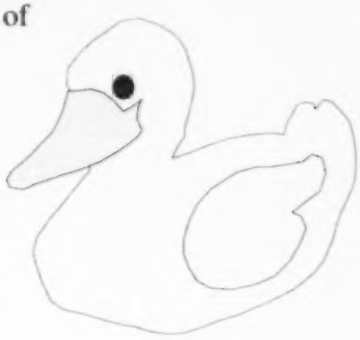
You might think it's a little early to talk about math and your baby, but it turns out that music now may make a difference in her math skills later. Recent studies suggest that listening to certain kinds of music may be valuable to a child's mathematical ability.

Mozart and Brahms are among composers whose music is named in the research. If you have never listened much to classical music, you might want to try it again. Public radio stations play it frequently. Some classical music can be borrowed at no charge from your local public library. You could open a new musical window to your whole family.

But even if classical music doesn't become your favorite, be sure to let lots of good music of all kinds into your baby's life.

Sounds Like Bath Time

Bath time provides a great opportunity for learning. It's a natural time for baby to begin learning parts of the body.



Place your baby in the bath in a way to make her secure. Then, in an orderly way, wash each part of her body. Talk about what you are doing: "First, let's wash your face—your nose, your mouth, your ears. Now let's do your arms. How about washing your tummy?"

Most babies soon look forward to bath time. Toddlers like toys in the tub, and have such good times that they may be reluctant to come out!

Sounds Like Feeding Time

Feeding time is a perfect time for naming foods and utensils. The act of eating also stimulates the beginning of conversations, sounds, and facial expressions.

Make sure your baby is comfortable and secure in a high chair. Then set up your baby's food. Name the food in a way that helps your baby look forward to it. You might say something like: "Yummy applesauce" as you spoon it into baby's mouth. "Now, let's have some green beans. Aren't they good?"

"How about some milk? You can drink it from your own cup." Keep it clear and simple when you talk to your baby, and begin now to form the good habit of speaking with respect. Children know early whether you think they are important people.

Let's Find Some Rhythm

Babies and young children enjoy nursery rhymes and songs with a simple beat. Sit with your baby on your lap. Some old favorites are "This Little Piggy Went to Market," "Where Is Thumbkin," "Patty-Cake," "Hickory, Dickory Dock," and "Old MacDonald." Do any hand motions you know that match the rhymes or songs. When your baby babbles, stop and listen to the sounds, then continue with the rhyme or song.

Toddlers can sit across the floor from you while you do this activity. They enjoy doing the hand motions with you, but don't expect them to use both motions and words until they are three or four years old.

Try this with Patty-Cake.

Patty-Cake, Patty-Cake,
Baker's Man.
Bake me a cake
As fast as you can.
Mix it, and pat it,
And mark it with a "B"
And put it in the oven
For Baby and me.

You can mark it with the initial of your baby's name, for example: "Mark it with a T, and put it in the oven for Tommy and me." Use his name often, so he will quickly get to know it.

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Family Connections Early Start

Baby's Very First Toys

Newborn babies are fascinated by people's faces and by complex shapes and patterns. For several weeks a baby will use mostly her sight to explore the world so she needs interesting things to look at.

Mobiles will be among the first toys you make or buy for your baby. In selecting a mobile, keep in mind what your baby will see when lying down. The shape or pattern should be parallel to the baby's body. Newborns focus best at about eight to ten inches, so hang a mobile at that height. To make an interesting mobile, draw or copy bold black patterns on white cardboard squares. This will provide a sharp contrast that helps your baby see shapes more clearly. Punch holes in all four corners of the cards and tie them onto a hanger with ribbon or yarn. Be sure the hanger is secure so it can't fall into the crib.

A baby will look at a book tucked into a mattress on the side of the crib. Change the book, mobile, and other things such as small stuffed animals or unbreakable crib mirrors to give him something new to see.

Around eight weeks babies open their fists most of their waking time. Your baby will then wave her arms freely while lying flat on her back. Now she's ready for a toy that is easy to grasp, is light enough not to hurt if she drops it on herself, and makes a noise. These toys can include soft blocks or balls with bells or squeakers inside or a simple rattle. Such toys are valuable because they direct your baby's eyes and attention to what her hands are doing. This helps her learn that her hands are a part of her body and that she can control what her hands do.

Things happen fast with babies. It's almost impossible to believe how much they learn in the first weeks of their lives with you to help. Carefully selected toys can increase learning and stimulate brain development. Babies and young children learn the most when you simply let them play!

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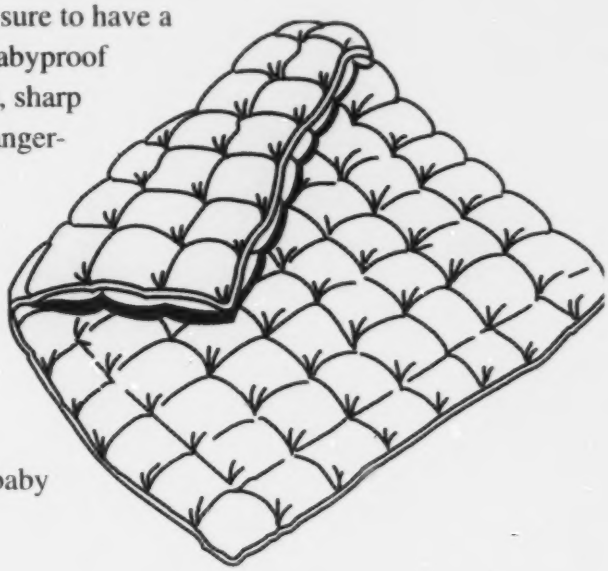
Safety First

From your baby's earliest days, provide her with as much freedom as possible. A blanket on the floor in a safe area works well. Use playpens when you cannot watch your baby to ensure her safety. Do not use walkers or infant seats set on a table or a high place because they can be quite dangerous. Your baby's movements could cause an infant seat to tip over and fall.

When crawling time arrives, be sure to have a large, safe area for baby to explore. Babyproof your house. Put away breakable items, sharp objects, and anything that might be dangerous to your baby. Look carefully for small objects that can be easily swallowed and remove them from the area. Saying "no" all the time to young babies will serve only to frustrate both you and the baby.



There will be time enough to display your prized things after your baby has had time to explore.

Mirror for Your Baby

Babies learn early by imitating. Parents can help children by imitating too. Lean over your baby in his crib. If he smiles, smile back. If he coos, you coo.

Whatever motion he makes, imitate it. Give him your undivided interest. When you reflect back what he does, you are showing him how to relate to others, and how much you love him.

Awaken All Five Senses

Give your child things to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. At times when you can give the baby your full attention, stimulate more than one sense at the same time. Here are a few ideas to use during the first six months:

- Provide interesting things for the baby to see at different times and in different places.
- Hang a colorful mobile over the crib.
- Play a music box or other soft music.
- Cut pictures out of magazines and tape them where they are visible but out of reach.
- Place a variety of safe items in your baby's hands, one at a time. Rattles, soft cloths, and stuffed animals work well. Talk about each item and how it feels while the baby holds it.

Hello and Goodbye

Hold the baby on your lap so she can see your face. Say "hello." Then say "bye-bye" and look away for a moment. When you make eye contact again, say "hello."

Continue for as long as the baby stays interested. Add a handshake with "hello" and a wave with "bye-bye." Then put her in her crib and wave bye-bye as you step out of the room. Step back in and say "hello."

You can be your baby's best educational toy!

If You're Happy and You Know It

Happy songs make everyone smile. Sing to your baby while changing or bathing him. Make time in your day for a special singing activity.

Prop your baby up facing you so that you can make eye contact. Rock back and forth as you sing. Do the motions to the words with your baby's hands, head, and feet.

If you're happy and you know it,
clap your hands. (clap, clap)

If you're happy and you know it,
clap your hands. (clap, clap)

If you're happy and you know it,
your face will surely show it.

If you're happy and you know it,
clap your hands. (clap, clap)

Repeat the song, substituting the following words and actions for clapping:

pat your head (pat, pat)

tap your feet (tap, tap)

do all three (clap clap, pat pat, tap tap)

Toddlers enjoy trying to sing along. Help with the motions as much as needed. With two-year-olds, try adding extra verses (shout hurray, give a hug, blow a kiss). Encourage your child to make up extra verses, too.

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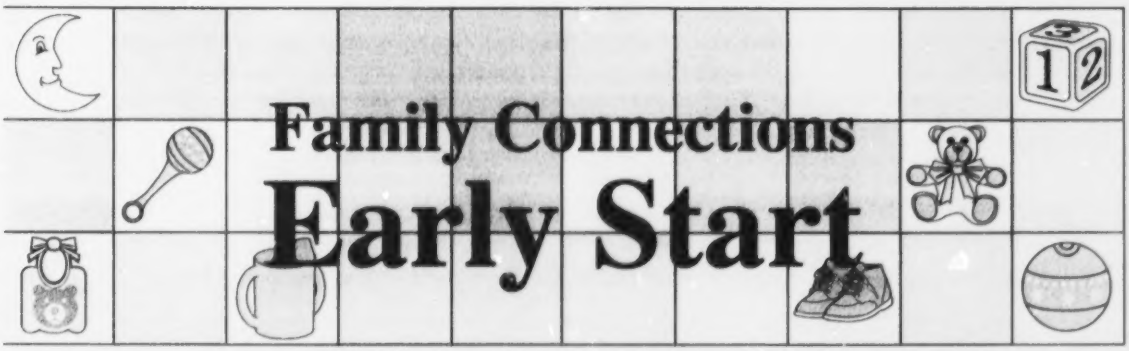


Good Health Starts with Nutrition

Babies are like delicate flowers growing in a garden. To blossom, they depend on parents and others for love and proper care. Parents can help young children form good health habits from birth. In fact, good care begins even before the baby is born, with the health habits of the expectant mother. It continues soon after birth, when a mother begins to nurse her baby.

Mothers who can nurse their children through the first year of life give them the very best nutrition possible, but they must guard their own health. Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Exercise regularly, practice good hygiene, and—somehow!—get plenty of rest. Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other harmful drugs because they get into breast milk.

Start adding solid foods to the baby's diet when the child is about six months old. Strained bananas are a good way to begin. One by one, try other softened or mashed fruits. Then introduce vegetables, starting with mashed potatoes. It is a good idea to give your baby only one new food each day. This lets you see if the child has any allergic reaction.

Children should participate in the family meal as soon as possible. By watching others in the family they will learn to use utensils, sit at the table, and learn good manners. Include your child in the dinner conversation. It is important to talk to young children as often as possible, even if they can only respond with smiles, coos, and gurgles. Remember, parents are the gardeners who help their children grow strong bodies and alert minds.

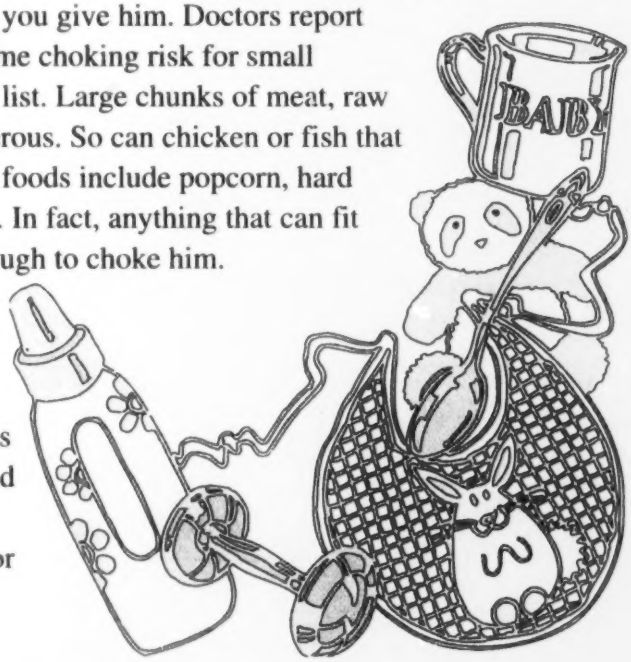
New Mothers and Good Health

Mothers who have new babies need a lot of strength and energy to care for their children. Continue to see a doctor or health professional regularly, especially if you are nursing. This kind of care is also important for women who are planning another pregnancy. A woman's good health habits decrease her chances of giving birth to children who are low in birthweight. Low birthweight babies are more likely to have lifelong health and learning problems. Women with good health habits are less likely to have children who develop asthma, are mentally challenged, develop speech and language problems, have short attention spans, or become hyperactive.

Small Children Can Choke on Small Objects

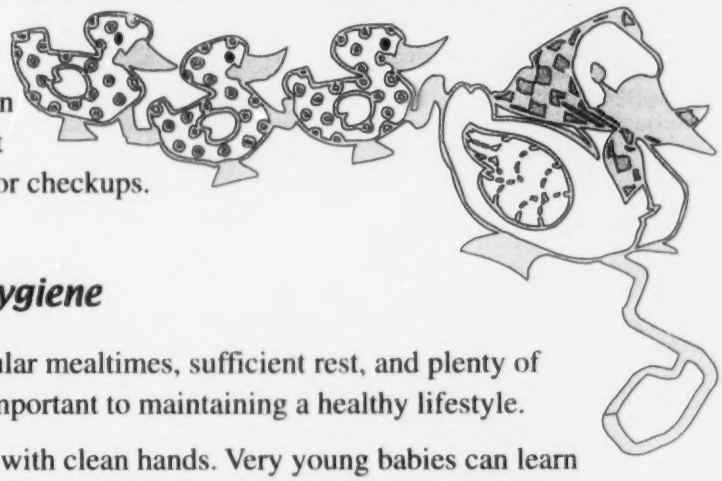
As your toddler starts eating solid food, you need to be extra careful about the foods you give him. Doctors report that hard, solid foods are the prime choking risk for small children. Nuts and seeds top the list. Large chunks of meat, raw fruit, or vegetables can be dangerous. So can chicken or fish that have bones in them. Other risky foods include popcorn, hard candy, peanut butter, and raisins. In fact, anything that can fit into a baby's mouth is small enough to choke him.

You can help prevent choking by staying close while your toddler eats. Don't force him to eat if he is drowsy. Babies should never be left unsupervised while eating, drinking, and playing. They should never eat or drink while lying down.



Those All-Important Shots

You can protect your children from many life-threatening illnesses by making sure they receive immunizations. When they are two months old, babies should start getting scheduled inoculations for measles, mumps, German measles (rubella), diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, type b influenza (Hib), polio, and tuberculosis. Ask your doctor for an immunization schedule to follow, and set up regular appointments for checkups.



Good Health, Good Hygiene

Good hygiene, regular mealtimes, sufficient rest, and plenty of exercise are all important to maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

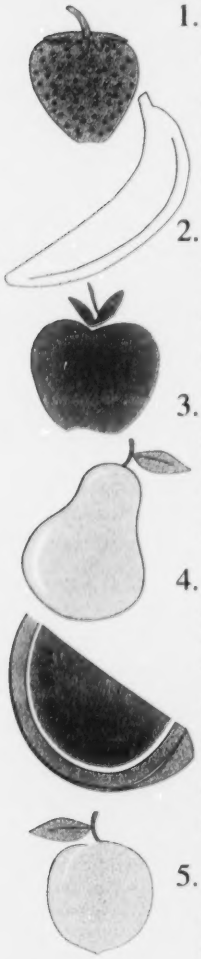
Good hygiene starts with clean hands. Very young babies can learn early to associate hand washing with mealtime and diaper changes. They become familiar with having their hands and face washed before and after they are fed. Washing their hands, as well as your hands, after diaper changes establishes an important habit. Talk to them as you use the washcloth. They soon understand that being clean is important.

Look at This!

Eyesight is developing when your baby is born. Try this activity to help the process along. Make sure your baby is in a comfortable position. Then hold out a small toy or object for the baby to touch. Puff balls, stuffed animals, or rattles work well. After the baby has touched it, hold the object so that the baby can see it. Move the object slowly from your baby's left side to the right side. Watch as your baby's eyes track the object.

Special Information about Nutrition

Your child will be exposed to many foods in different environments. Child care providers, friends, relatives, and others sometimes have different and confusing ideas about what foods children should eat. Here are some well-accepted nutrition hints:



1. Introduce your baby to juice from a cup after six months, but not more than eight or so ounces a day.
2. Offer your baby water throughout the day, and serve it in a cup.
3. Never give your baby soda drinks, either from a cup or a bottle.
4. Avoid giving your baby candy as much as possible, even after the child gets older. Apple slices and other fruit make much healthier snacks, and most children like them—at least until someone introduces candy into their lives!
5. Don't give your babies cake and cookies until they can ask for them. At that time, begin a "one-sweet-a-day" rule. Give your baby homemade treats when you can. Processed treats are loaded with sugar, fat, and salt.

Follow these simple guidelines from early on, and modify them as your child becomes a toddler and then a preschooler. Good food habits will help your child look and feel well.

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Family Connections
Early Start

Read to Your Baby

Reading is key to successful learning. The single most important activity for success in reading is reading to your child. When children hear others read to them, they want to read, too.

It is never too early to start reading to your baby. Even tiny infants in their crib are comforted by someone reading aloud, whether or not the content seems appropriate to their age. Hearing the rhythm of the words and feeling warm and secure in your arms will help your baby associate reading with pleasure.

Choose books with colorful pictures and easy words in large print. Hold baby in your lap so that you can point to the pictures as you read the words. Or just choose picture books and talk about what you and your baby are enjoying together. Do something different when she seems to lose interest. Babies have a short attention span. They may enjoy books for only a few minutes at a time. You can go back to books after a brief change of activity.

Be sure your baby sees you and others reading newspapers, magazines, and books. Whatever you read conveys the message that you think the written word is important.

The poet Strickland Gillian many years ago wrote a bit of verse: "Richer than I you can never be/I had a mother who read to me." Having a father who also reads to a child makes that child even richer.

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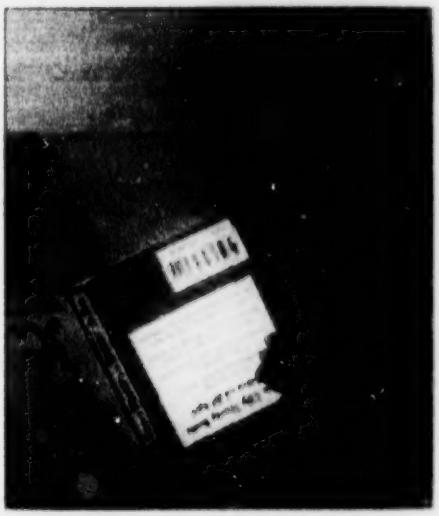
How Do We Learn to Read?

Studies have shown that a child's brain develops rapidly in the first three years of life. Connections in the brain are made as a result of a child's experiences. Here are some examples of experiences that lay the foundation for a child's future reading abilities:

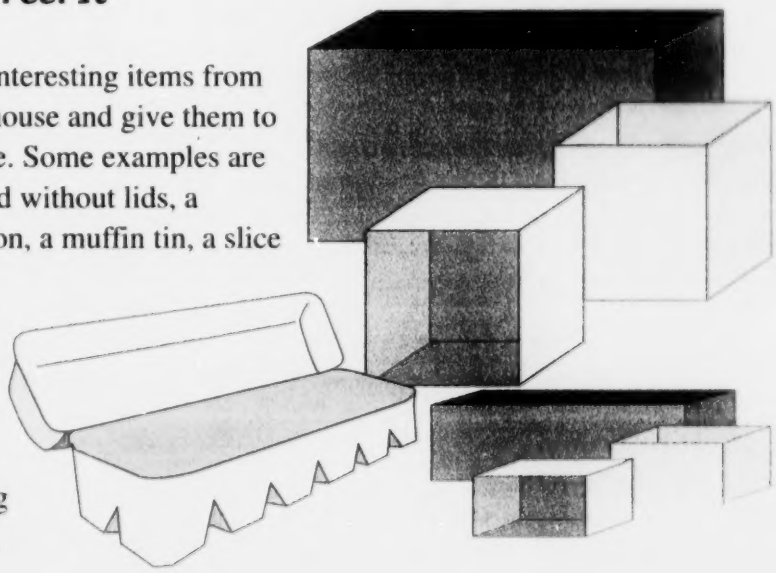


- Talk, read, and sing to your child. They learn from everything they see and hear.
- Surround your baby with books, even if he would rather play with them than look at them.
- Show your baby pictures and symbols and explain their meaning. Soon your baby will be able to make the connections between the printed and spoken word.

Important Tip: *Shared time is a gift all of its own.*

See It, Hear It, Feel It

Select some interesting items from around the house and give them to your baby to explore. Some examples are small boxes with and without lids, a strainer, an egg carton, a muffin tin, a slice of bread in a zip-top bag, and small soft cushions.



Name the items, talk about them, and play along as much as you like.

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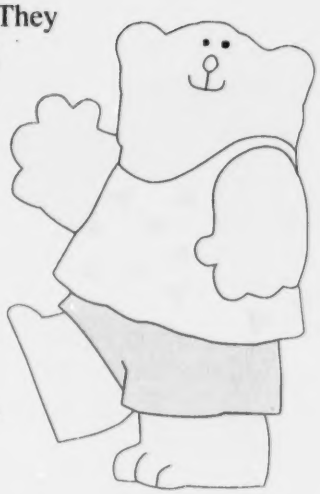
I Can Do That!

Babies love to imitate your actions and sounds. They also enjoy seeing you imitate their actions and sounds. As you and baby go back and forth, imitating and responding to each other, you can see the roots of what will someday be a conversation.



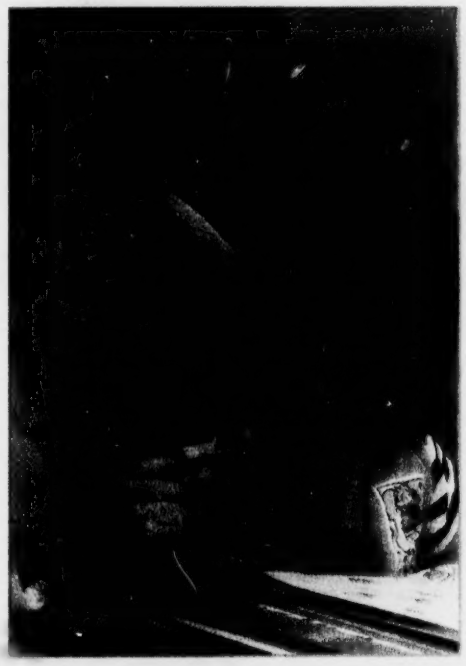
Start by sitting in a comfortable spot with your baby. Make eye contact. Make gestures or sounds for your baby to imitate.

Here are some favorites: Wave hello. Wave bye-bye. Play peek-a-boo. Gurgle, coo, or babble. Any time your baby makes a gesture or a sound, imitate it.

Not Too Much TV

Children under three years old need to interact with other people. It is important to talk, sing, and read to young children because their language skills are developing rapidly. So television watching should be limited, and done only in company with someone else.

Unlike a television, you can react to a child's words, facial expressions, and body language while reading a story to her. If she looks bored, you can change your tone or expression to capture her interest. If she laughs at a rhyme, you can repeat it.



Even the best children's programing cannot interact with your child in this way. Children need back-and-forth experiences with language so that they can learn to speak and express themselves well. When television takes the place of real, live language, poor language skills can result.

Where Is Baby?

Children like to hear their own names.

Hold your baby on your lap in a position that lets you clap your baby's hands. Then sing the following song, clapping and doing motions together as you sing. Sing to the tune of "Are You Sleeping?" (Are you sleeping, are you sleeping, brother John, brother John?)

Where is [baby's name]? (clap)
Where is [baby's name]? (clap)
Here you are. (Hug baby)
Here you are. (Hug baby)
How are you today, [baby's name]? (clap)
Very well, I thank you. (clap)
Time to sleep,
Time to sleep.

You can change the last lines to other actions: time to play, for instance.

Toddlers also enjoy this song. They can sit opposite you on the floor while you sing the song. Both of you can clap and do the hand motions suggested above. Or, have the child bring you two dolls. Sit on the floor opposite each other with the dolls in your laps. Do the activity as described for a real baby.

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Family Connections Early Start

Choosing and Using Child Care

It is a fact of American life that young children spend a substantial part of their days in the care of someone other than a parent. According to the U.S. Department of Education, more than 13 million infants, toddlers, and preschoolers receive regular care from adults other than their parents. Child care providers take care of babies and young children while parents or family members work, go to school, or take care of other responsibilities.

Knowing that your child is safe and well cared for in your absence can give you peace of mind. There are some steps you can take to help you select the best possible care for your child.

First, visit as many child care settings as you can in your area. You can visit both child care centers where children are cared for in a facility or family child care homes where children are cared for in smaller groups in someone's home. Look for a pleasant, clean, safe environment where your child can move about freely and have stimulating things to see and do. Look for trained child caregivers who clearly enjoy children.

Ask about daily routines. Do the children enjoy both quiet and active play times? Do they have regular mealtimes and snacks with good nutrition? Is there time for rest and naps? What arrangements do they have for first aid and illness?

If you have someone in your home to care for your child, help her learn your child's routines, preferences, and needs. Try to spend enough time with your care provider every day so you can be familiar with progress and problems. The same standards that assure good group care apply to care in your home.

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Parents who work full time outside the home may have an especially hard time finding affordable, good-quality care. There are federal funds available to help some families pay the cost of child care. Contact your local department of human services if you think your family may qualify.

You may have to delay buying some things you would like to have so that you can pay for the cost of good, quality child care. Your child will benefit from the enriching activities a quality child care program has to offer. Studies show that children in good child care eventually grow up to be successful in school and later in life. So what could be more important than knowing that your child is being cared for by skillful and loving caregivers?

Talk While You Play

Set aside a special time each day for you and your child to play together. It works best if you know ahead of time what play activity you are going to do. You might make a special drawer or folder where you collect ideas from books, magazines, or other parents.

Things you might do together include looking through a catalog, going for a walk, or playing with dolls. As you play, talk to your child with words that are positive and loving.

Enjoy this time together. The special words and feelings of appreciation that you share with your child can make a big difference in both your lives now and in the years to come.

Name Toy

It's easy to make a name toy for your toddler. Get a 5" x 8" index card. Place a photograph of your baby on one side of the card. Then write your baby's name with a crayon or marker on the other side. Cover both sides with clear contact paper or slip it into a zip-top bag and seal it. Whichever side is up shows either your baby's name or picture.

This card is likely to become a favorite toy. It will also teach your toddler how to recognize his own name.

Help Your Baby Relax

You can see the effects of being in the fetal position in your newborn baby. After all, she has been curled up for quite a while, and she's just worked hard to emerge. She needs to relax.

Lay your baby on a bed or some other soft surface. Pat or rub her slowly and gently on the arms, legs, and tummy. You will feel her body relax. Slowly open and close her arms across her chest. Now hold the baby's ankles and move her legs up and down slowly to stretch out the muscles.

You can calm a toddler by helping him relax, too. Have him sit opposite you while you hold hands. Put your feet against his. Gently pull each other back and forth while you sing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." Relax with your two-year-old by putting on some music and dancing with him. Raise your arms high and then hang them low while you dance.

Extend Your Child's Family

When you need to be away from your baby or young child, leave her with relatives or close friends whenever possible. The time your child spends with grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and older brothers and sisters helps establish family ties and makes her world bigger.

It also lets her relate to different personalities. It is no accident that the word "relative" is similar to "relates." Family members share a special bond. Just as you do when you leave your child with a child care provider, help them be comfortable together. Tell them what foods she likes best, when she naps, and other helpful information.

Don't forget that "blankie" and favorite comforting toy.

How Babies Grow

Cognitive (Knowing) Skills, Motor Skills, Social Skills, Language Skills

6 months

Watches own fingers and hands.
Explores surroundings. Turns around when lying on stomach.
Picks up toy with one hand.
Social smile.
Distinguishes mother from others.
Reacts to voices.
Vocalizes spontaneously and is social.

12 months

Reacts to own name.
Puts objects in containers. Walks around furniture while holding on.
Picks up small objects, can grasp them between thumb and finger.
Plays patty-cake.
Plays social games like peek-a-boo and bye-bye. Understands words like no, stop, or all gone.
Says word sounds like Ma-ma or Da-da.

18 months

Uses an object purposefully.
Imitates a body gesture. Runs.
Scribbles with crayons. Greets people with "hi" or similar word.
Gives kisses or hugs. Asks for food or drink with words.
Talks in single words.

24 months

Identifies body parts.
Acts and uses toys appropriately.
Runs well, seldom falls.
Turns pages of picture books one at a time. Shows sympathy, tries to comfort other children.
Usually responds to correction, stops. Uses at least 10 words.
Follows two-part instructions.

36 months

Understands simple stories.
Begins sorting by size and shape.
Walks up and down stairs, placing one foot on each step.
Cuts with small scissors. Plays with other children (cars, dolls, building blocks).
Plays a role in "pretend" games (mom, dad, teacher, space pilot).
Talks clearly, is understandable most of the time.
Understands preposition words like *in*, *on*, *under*, and *beside*.

Remember, all children grow and develop at their own pace. If you have concerns about your child's development, trust your instincts. Contact your physician or your local early intervention program by calling your department of human services.

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Family Connections
Early Start

Simple Activities Develop Young Minds

Brain research has confirmed what many parents already know—that children learn rapidly during the first three or four years of life. Everything they see, hear, touch, taste, and smell helps them make sense of their new world. Newborns are able to tell the difference between their own mothers and other people through the sense of smell. You can build on this inborn ability to learn by interacting with your baby in ways that are easy and fun.

From the time children are born until they can move around independently, it is important to touch, talk to, play with, and respond to them. Babies can't go to where the action is, so you must bring the action to them. Read to them or sing them a song. Play peek-a-boo. Let them touch clothing and toys that have different colors and textures. Move your hands or other objects in front of them so that their eyes follow the movement. Gently help them exercise their limbs.

Encourage play. Play is a child's work. It is the primary way young children learn. Play can involve objects in the home such as plastic containers to nest or fill and empty, cardboard tubes, and cardboard boxes. Play gets more complex as the child gets older. For example, an infant might play by shaking a rattle or holding a soft toy. A one-year-old might roll a ball around the room. A two-year-old might arrange blocks in interesting patterns.

Parents are a child's first and best teachers. The most important things you can give your children—love, time, and attention—cannot be bought with money, but they are invaluable to your child's early learning.

Take Daily Walks

If you have a baby carriage, take your baby for an outing whenever possible. When the baby can sit up, use a stroller. Invite others along—the fresh air and sunlight can do everyone some good.

When your child can walk, let her walk with you. Walk at her pace and call attention to colors, shapes, sizes, and sounds. Point out spring blossoms or falling leaves, the reflection of sunlight on water, the sounds of birds, and other parts of nature. Her unlimited curiosity and delight will give you a fresh look, too.

Sing, Hum, and Whistle

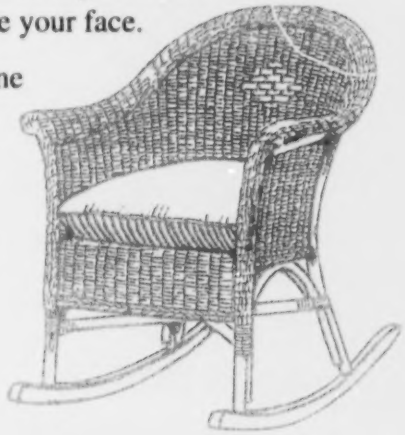
Music soothes your child and builds memory skills. You don't have to be a great musician to sing, hum, or whistle while you are with your child. Babies love to hear your voice.

Sing as you bathe, change, or feed your baby. Repeat one song over and over before you switch to a different song. Babies love "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," "The ABC Song," "Ten Little Indians," "Are You Sleeping?" and "Row, Row, Row Your Boat."

As children get older, invite them to sing along or take turns singing.

The Rocking Chair

Movement calms the agitated child and stimulates the quiet one. Nothing works better than a rocking chair. As you rock, hold your baby on your shoulder. Let him explore your face.



As you hold him in your arms offer him one of your fingers to grasp.

Toddlers can sit in your lap and talk with you as you rock. Hug them often as you rock and talk together. They may want their favorite stuffed animal to join you. Quiet time in the rocking chair will be among your most treasured memories.

Color Boxes

Some of the best educational toys can't be bought. You can make them with a few common items you might already have.

Use a plastic box of any color that has a lid the same color. Collect unbreakable items of the same color and place them in the box. Babies enjoy shaking small boxes or watching as you open the box and show them one surprise after another.

As you show each item, say its color and name (a blue bunny, a blue ball, etc.). Toddlers like to empty and fill color boxes. Two-year-olds like to collect and sort their own items. This kind of toy can include something to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell.

Important Tip:

"New babies sleep exactly the amount that their personal physiology tells them to sleep. There is nothing that you can do to make your baby sleep more than this amount and nothing that the baby can do to sleep less."

Penelope Leach, psychologist

The Secret of the Schedule

Some people love schedules. Others hate them. Most babies thrive on them. New parents usually find it works best to establish routines that include regular periods of exercise, rest, and hygiene.

Children have an inborn desire to move about. This movement is often stimulated by curiosity, so it is helpful to expose your baby to different experiences and surroundings. Early in the morning is a good time for being out in the yard, going to a playground, taking a trip to the park, or going on some other outing. After physical activity, it will be natural for your baby to rest or nap.

A restful activity like a story or other creative play works very well after lunch. After a while, the baby will be ready for more exercise, then a rest period and maybe another nap. When dinner time arrives, hygiene activities will again be important. Quiet play is appropriate after dinner, followed by a bedtime routine that includes hygiene activities.

No schedule suits everyone. But you can remember to balance exercise, rest, and hygiene as you set up a schedule that works for you and your family. Things don't always go exactly as planned. But if you stick to healthy routines, you will find your child happy and comfortable. In addition, you will all benefit from better child behavior.

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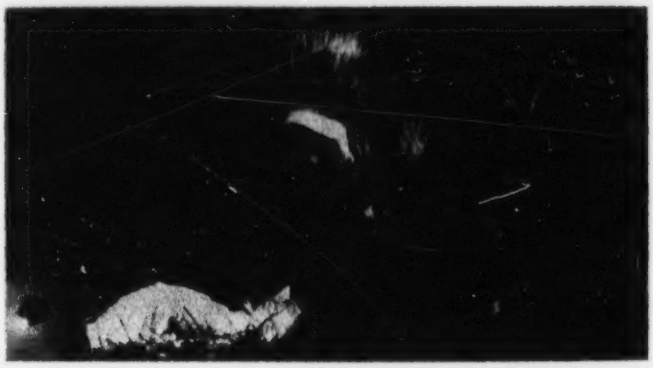
Learning Positive Behaviors



As children learn to crawl and walk, parents must help them understand that some behaviors are not safe. They must also encourage behaviors that will help the child in social situations—and discourage behaviors that are not appropriate. This kind of teaching usually begins when the child is about eight months old. It should be done in a way that is firm, fair, and positive.

Firm means setting boundaries and, as children grow older, following through on whatever consequences you have set up. *Fair* means letting the child know ahead of time what behaviors you expect of them and what will happen if they do not behave as expected. *Positive* means giving support and encouragement instead of yelling or saying negative things about the child.

The way you talk to, play with, and discipline your children has an effect on the way they think about themselves and how they treat others. Children who receive kindness, respect, and fairness from their parents tend to be kind, respectful, and fair with others. They are more likely to be good friends and have strong social skills as adults.

Children who are treated with anger, yelled at, or hit may imitate those behaviors with others. Just think of how it confuses a child to have a parent spanking her and saying, "Don't you ever hit your little brother again." Hitting a baby is not acceptable for any reason and is considered abuse.

This does not mean parents should never discipline their children. Of course you must. But it does suggest that you will want to use positive discipline. Parents who practice positive discipline see themselves as teachers. They see their child's "misbehavior" as "mistaken" behavior. They try to help children learn from their mistakes. Above all, the goal of discipline should not be to punish, but to teach self-control.

The Three "Rs" of Positive Discipline

einforcement: Often a child's good behavior goes unnoticed. Praise your children every chance you get. Say things like "You did a great job picking up your toys" or "I feel happy when you are nice to your sister."

Restitution: Children need to learn the natural consequences of their behavior. For example, even very young children can help clean up a spilled drink or return a toy to a playmate and say they are sorry for taking it.

Redirection: It is sometimes easier to distract your child from a situation that is increasing tension between the two of you and turning into a battle of wills. For example, instead of constantly asking your child not to bang her cup on the high chair, distract her with a song, activity, or another interesting toy.

Important Tip:

Sometimes difficult behaviors are the result of a child feeling hungry, tired, ill, or frustrated. Sometimes children act out for attention. But if the reason for your child's repeated tantrums are not clear to you, trust your instincts. Ask your physician or contact your local department of human services' early intervention program for help.

Squeeze Toy

ake a squeeze toy by stuffing a knee-high stocking with cotton and tying it at one end or in segments. After your baby has played with it for a while, hide part of the toy under a towel and see if he can still find it. Hide it behind your back and see if your baby tries to look for it before you bring it back in sight.

See if he can grasp two segments at the same time. Sit on a chair with your baby in your lap and drop the toy to the floor. See if your baby watches it fall. Pick up the toy and give it to your baby. See if you can get the baby also to drop it to the floor and retrieve it. Take turns playing with the toy. Imitate what your baby does with it and see if your baby can imitate what you do.

Curiosity Is a Master Teacher

Expose your child to as many different experiences as possible. The building blocks of learning—colors, letters, numbers, shapes—are a result of experiences. Babies also learn major concepts—big and small, up and down, over and under—in a natural way, through experience. These experiences develop brain connections that will be used for future learning.

Handling rough and smooth things and heavy and light ones will leave lasting impressions. Watch your baby open and close cabinets and drawers, empty and fill containers, and go in and out of closets. Be sure someone is watching to see that your little one is safe. Then let the exploration continue. It's fun to watch your baby's reactions.

Babies and Buddies

Experts say that babies who are used to playing games with their parents will come to understand that this is the best way to interact with others. And babies like having buddies, even when they're still in their cribs.

Before his first birthday, your baby will begin to notice other children at the playground, in the grocery store, and even during walks while in his stroller. Now is the time to let him be with other children.

From 14 to 18 months, toddlers copy each other's behavior, playing with toys in the same way. By imitating each other, babies learn how similar they are to other people. If your baby has the opportunity to be with other babies, she will realize that other kids have the same feelings she does. This discovery is the beginning stage of empathy. Understanding how others feel can have a profound effect on their behavior toward others as children grow into adulthood.

Crawlers and Walkers Are Doers

Babies 8 to 18 months old are sometimes called crawlers and walkers. What do these young ones do? Typically, they:

- use sounds and gestures to say hello or get attention
- point at things they want
- say a few simple words
- like rhymes and simple songs
- enjoy reading with a favorite person
- turn the pages in sturdy books
- put objects such as nesting cups inside each other

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(continued from page 3)

- fill containers with water or small objects, then dump them out
- hold large crayons and make marks on paper

You will want to give your crawler/walker lots of opportunities to do all these things.

Adapted from *Ready, Set, Read for Families*, a document from America Reads Challenge, a joint project of the Corporation for National Service, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Books to Read Aloud

What are the best books to read aloud? Jim Trelease suggests several books that have stood the test of time in *The New Read Aloud Handbook* (Penguin Books, 1989). According to Trelease, these books contain patterns in the words and sentences that children learn to repeat quickly. Here are some of the books he recommends.

Are You My Mother? by Philip D. Eastman (Random House, 1960)
Ask Mr. Bear by Marjorie Flack (Macmillan, 1986)
Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin Jr. (Holt, 1983)
The Cake That Mack Ate by Rose Robart (Atlantic, 1986)
Chicken Soup with Rice by Maurice Sendak (Harper, 1962)
Do You Want to Be My Friend? by Eric Carle (Putnam, 1986)
Drummer Hoff by Barbara Emberly (Prentice-Hall, 1967)
The Elephant and the Bad Baby by Elfrida Vipont (Putnam, 1986)
Fat Mouse by Harry Stevens (Viking, 1987)
Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown (Harper, 1947)
The Gingerbread Boy by Paul Galdone (Clarion, 1975)
The Gunnywolf by Antionette Delaney (Harper, 1988)
Hattie and the Fox by Mem Fox (Bradbury, 1987)
Henny Penny by Paul Galdone (Clarion, 1968)
The House That Jack Built by Rodney Peppe (Delacorte, 1985)

Ask your librarian for these and other recommended books. Buy books for your child as often as you can. Sometimes you can find nice copies in yard sales. If friends and relatives ask for gift suggestions, books are a great idea.

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The Impact of Being a Parent

Some of us seem to think that because a newborn is helpless, he can be controlled, directed, and molded into whatever his parents wish. New parents quickly find out, however, that each baby is unique from the start, with his own needs, wants, and feelings. Your new baby has a complex genetic potential that plays an important role in how he will grow and develop.

It may take a while to get used to this idea. Before your baby was born, you had complete control over her environment. You decided what nourishment she got. You provided exercise by walking and perhaps in other ways. Through conversation, music, and reading aloud, you paved the way for language development.

But you begin giving up that control the day your newborn arrives. You begin the difficult but rewarding work of teaching your child to someday take control of his or her life.

This independence doesn't happen all at once. During the first eight months, your baby is very dependent on you. At about nine months, things begin to change. As babies begin to crawl and walk, they are able to go more places on their own. By the time they are 18 months old they will be very determined to do things their way. Your job as a parent is to encourage this independence while keeping your child safe and teaching them valuable lessons. Fortunately, many of the most important things you do are simple, enjoyable, and come quite naturally once you are aware of how much they mean to your child.

Each year, on your child's birthday, you can take a few moments to reflect on just how far both of you have come. By the time he is five you will realize how much you have helped your child establish a strong foundation on which to function ably in school and in other social settings. Your job as a parent will not be finished, but your child will have reached a major milestone on the path to independence.

Being a parent is not easy, but few jobs have bigger rewards.

Listen to Your Child

An old saying says, "Since we have two ears and one mouth, we should listen twice as much as we talk." Researchers put it a different way: We should listen 70% of the time and talk only 30%.

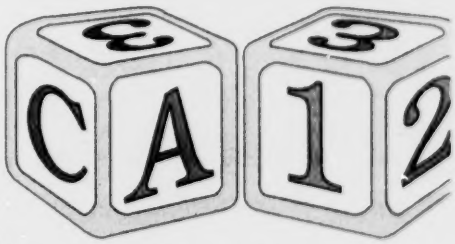
The first sounds you listen to from your baby are cries. Each cry sends a different message: *I'm hungry. My diaper is wet. My tummy hurts. Please hold me. Let me hear your voice.* Listen closely, and you will become very good at knowing what your baby wants.

Toddlers are able to give you more complex messages, even without full sentences. Two-year-olds are full of curiosity. Listen to their questions. Listen also to the powerful wants and needs behind their questions. They offer clues about who and what your child will become. Parents who listen are better able to guide and support their children.

Young children do not understand that you are listening to them unless you make eye contact. No matter how busy you may be folding laundry or preparing a meal, take time to look at her often while she is talking to you.

Sounds Great!

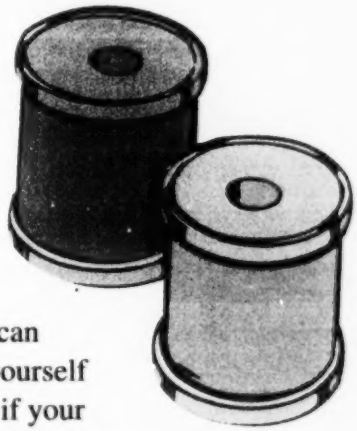
Children respond to music, bells, and other soft sounds. Gather several things that make soothing sounds: a bell, a glass and a spoon, two blocks, a paper plate and a brush, and a rattle. Show your baby each item separately, then make the sound. When the baby smiles, smile back. When the baby coos or gurgles, coo or gurgle back.



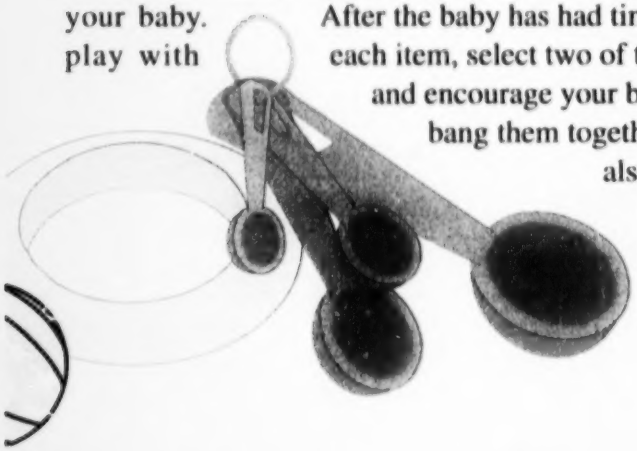
You can do a similar activity with toddlers. Sit on the floor opposite each other. Place your supply of "sound makers" between you. Take turns choosing one or two items and using them to make a soft sound. After you have five items, take turns naming them. Then ask your child to turn his or her back. Remove an item from the pile. When the child turns back around, ask which item is missing. Take turns doing this for as long as both of you are enjoying it.

A House Full of Toys

Collect several objects that are appealing and safe for the baby to handle or even put in his mouth without being swallowed. Some popular items are a smooth clothespin (the old-fashioned kind, without a spring), large empty spools of thread that can be tied together securely by a ribbon, a smooth plastic bracelet, a rattle, or a squeeze toy.

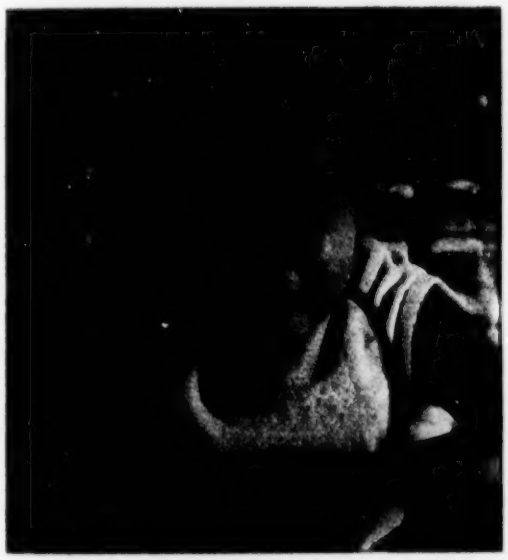


The objects should be easy to wash and large enough that they cannot be swallowed. Let your baby explore the objects, one at a time, while you name each one and talk about its color, texture, uses, and other features. Whatever you say is teaching your baby. After the baby has had time to play with each item, select two of them and encourage your baby to bang them together. You can also try it yourself and see if your baby will imitate you.



Parents Are a Child's Best Teacher

No one else knows your child as well as you do. You have the opportunity to be her best teacher. You can become part of your child's spirit of adventure by responding to her curiosity with sincere interest. Children are naturally curious, and they enjoy learning. You can enjoy watching them and joining in. Research shows that the amount of time parents spend playing with their preschool children is directly related to an increase in their verbal intelligence.



Parenting Like a Pro

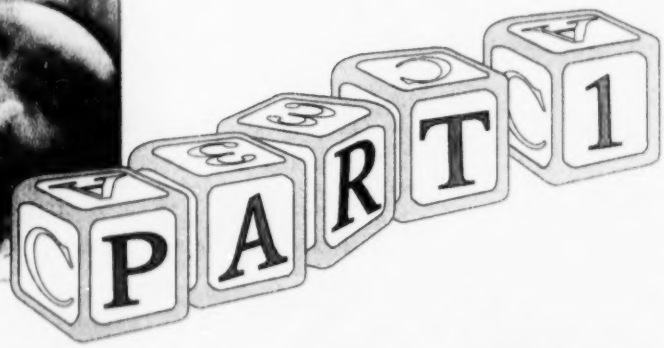
When Tiger Woods hits a golf ball and sends it sailing down the green, he makes it look easy. When Jennifer Capriatti hits a tennis ball, it seems to whiz across the net and land exactly where she wants. Professional athletes don't look like they are working hard. They know how to expend the least effort to get the greatest results.

So it is with parenting. Just as athletes do, you can learn "the basics" and practice new skills until you achieve excellence. Those who take the time to do this usually find themselves with fewer struggles and more time to enjoy their children as time goes on.

During the first eight months, your instincts tell you many ways to nurture your child. The techniques you use during this time help you build a strong, positive, and lasting relationship with your child. You can remember these techniques as "PART one."

Play with your baby.
Accent the positive.
Respond to your baby's needs.
Touch, hold, hug, and caress your baby as much as possible.

And always, always remember to love and enjoy your young ones.



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Family Connections Early Start

Nutrition: Keep It Natural

Good nutrition is important to your child's health. Fortunately, parents do not have to measure food in grams or ounces to make sure their children eat the right amounts of the right foods. Mother Nature gave humans an appetite system to help.

If we stick to purely natural foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, and freshly prepared meat, poultry, and fish, we will be more in tune with our appetite systems. We will know what to eat and how much.

Two mechanisms in our bodies work together to let us know we are eating right. One lets us know when we are full. The other lets us know when we are getting the right nutrients.

But these mechanisms can be "tricked." Foods with lots of chemicals, preservatives, and artificial colors and flavors can fool our bodies into thinking they have gotten proper nourishment. Once the body realizes it has been tricked, it sends a signal to the brain that says, "Eat more!" If we keep feeding our bodies processed foods instead of fresh foods, we can end up eating more and more food but getting less and less nutrition.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Guide Pyramid encourages us to stick to Mother Nature's plan. Parents can use it to help their children develop good eating habits as they gradually introduce new foods. Serving suggestions do not have to be followed perfectly each day, but what your child eats should match the pyramid pretty closely on a weekly basis.

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The First Year

Breast milk is the best food for our young. Ideally, breast feeding is to be tapered off gradually and naturally as you introduce your baby to table food, water, and juices. Not all mothers are able to or choose to breast feed. Formula derived from cow's milk or a soy substitute is often used when nursing is not possible. Whether you nurse, use formula, or combine the two, you can begin to introduce solid foods when your baby is about six months old. Mashed banana is a good starter food.

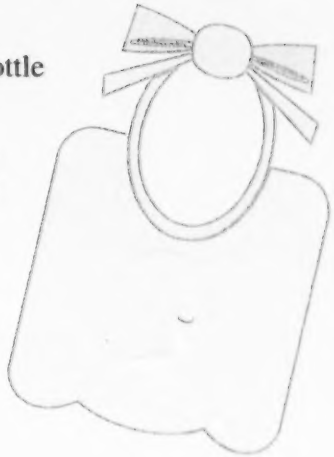
The Second Year

This is the year for introducing all kinds of solid foods in a soft consistency. Try new foods one at a time to test for allergies. If any food seems to cause a reaction—hives, headache, or some other discomfort—don't give your baby that food for a period of time. Be careful about these nine foods, which often cause allergic reactions: egg, fish, wheat, peanuts, shellfish, soy, walnuts, almonds, and milk.

The Third Year

When children are about two years old, they begin to make the transition to regular table food. It is a good idea to slowly increase the solid consistency of foods. Give the child food pieces that are large enough to require some chewing, but not so large that the child might choke. By gradually getting children used to eating solid foods, you prepare them to chew well and with strength.

Spoon Feeding



Learning to eat from a spoon instead of a bottle can be a messy adventure. Think about how to make mealtime more pleasant for both you and your baby. First, take your time. Set your baby up with a full bib, an old T-shirt, or another convenient coverall. Talk to your baby as you feed him. Let the baby participate as much as possible. You might let the baby hold a second spoon as his own. He will soon try to do what you are doing.

Making Food Choices

Set several different foods in front of your baby. Then encourage her to let you know which food she would like. If pointing is the way your child communicates, that is fine. If sounds or words are appropriate, encourage these as well. It is good for the baby to play an active part in the feeding process, and it can be fun for both of you. Letting baby make choices can develop initiative.

Gripping

Gripping is the ability to pick up small pieces of food with the thumb and finger. Picking up food helps the baby develop this grasp. Some foods are especially popular when feeding skills get to this point. One is raisins. Another is Cheerios.

Look for cereals and other products that don't have artificial color in them and use little or no artificial flavors or preservatives. Do not leave your baby alone while he or she is eating finger foods. Stay nearby in case the baby chokes.

Some Nursery Rhymes for Eaters

Babies and toddlers love the rhyme in these old favorites.

Jack Horner

Little Jack Horner
Sat in a corner
Eating his Christmas pie.
He stuck in his thumb,
And pulled out a plum,
And said:
"What a good boy am I."

Miss Muffet

Little Miss Muffet
Sat on a tuffet,
Eating her curds and whey.
Along came a spider
Who sat down beside her,
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

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